# Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources

# Annual Accountability Report for the Fiscal Year 2008-2009

Report DNR 2009–2
September 2009

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## 1 Accountability Statement

The accountability report of the Department of Natural Resources, for the year ended March 31, 2009, is prepared pursuant to the *Provincial Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the department's business plan information for the fiscal year 2008-09. The reporting of departmental outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments and opinions by department management and staff.

We acknowledge that this accountability report is the responsibility of the management of the Department of Natural Resources. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the department's business plan for the year.

Original Signed By
Minister - John A. M$^{ac}$Donell

Original Signed By
Deputy Minister - Peter C. Underwood

## 2 Message From The Minister

It is my pleasure to present the Accountability Report of the Department of Natural Resources. This report is a summary of the department's activities during the year that ended on March 31, 2009 and is an opportunity to provide the public with information on last year's accomplishments relative to the commitments in the 2008-09 Business Plan.

Since being appointed Minister in June 2009, I have quickly become aware of the department's wide and diverse range of responsibilities. There are three significant achievements from last year that I would like to highlight in particular.

The first phase of the three-phase process to develop a Natural Resources Strategy for the province was completed and work on the second phase began. I would like to express my appreciation to the staff of Voluntary Planning and the members of the Citizen Engagement Committee for their work during the initial phase. I would also like to thank the many Nova Scotians who participated in the citizen engagement phase by attending meetings and workshops and by providing submissions and comments. Completion of the Strategy, which is expected in 2010, will fulfill one of government's environmental and economic goals included in the *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act*.

Another achievement of note during the year was the designation of the Joggins Fossil Cliffs as a World Heritage Site in July 2008. The designation is the culmination of over 10 years of work by members of the local community and three levels of government. Natural Resources staff provided the scientific leadership to document and explain the outstanding universal value of the site. The Joggins Fossil Cliffs became one of 14 sites in Canada inscribed on the World Heritage List and one of only nine Canadian sites inscribed for their natural significance. The inscription of the Joggins Fossil Cliffs is an important recognition of the global value and importance of this outstanding natural resource.

Finally, I would like to recognize the professionalism and dedication of the individuals and organizations that responded to the Lake Echo-Porters Lake and Tantallon wildfires in mid-June 2008. The Lake Echo-Porters Lake fire was the largest wildfire in an urban area in the province's history and the largest fire in over 30 years. It resulted in the most significant fire-caused evacuation in Nova Scotia's history. The actions that were taken to suppress these wildfires, in extremely challenging conditions, were coordinated and led by the department and its staff and provided the public with a clear picture of the expertise, skills and commitment of those involved.

On behalf of all Nova Scotians, I would like to thank the entire staff of the department for their work throughout the year to deliver departmental programs and services. Our forests, geological and wildlife resources, the provincial parks system, and our Crown land base are valued components of the province's natural capital. It is our shared responsibility to ensure that they are managed on a sustainable basis. More information about the department can be obtained by visiting our website at http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/ .

Sincerely,
Honourable John A. M$^{ac}$Donell
Minister of Natural Resources

## 3 Introduction

This document reports on the specific priorities and performance measures that were identified in the department's 2008-09 Business Plan. An electronic version of the plan can be accessed at http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/businessplan/default.htm.

The principal responsibility of the department is the management of natural resources (forests, wildlife, minerals, parks) and Crown lands in the province. When reviewing this document, readers should recognize and be aware of several facts.

First, Nova Scotia has one of the lowest proportions of Crown lands of all provinces and territories, at just over a quarter of the province's land mass. Increasingly high public expectations and numerous competing demands for the use of this limited public land and resource base have created ongoing challenges that the department must address in creative and collaborative ways. Although the province has acquired several significant properties in recent years, the fact remains that a relatively small proportion of this province is publicly owned.

Second, as in previous accountability reports, we have provided a caution that the unpredictability of nature is a continuous influence on departmental operations, that weather patterns and climatic conditions vary greatly from year to year, and that this can have a significant impact on departmental priorities and activities, resources and budgets. Forest fires, insect infestations, wildlife and forest health, park attendance, and the state of departmental infrastructure, such as boardwalks and trails, are all affected by the weather and our climate.

Third, due to the location of the majority of our natural resources, the department has a higher profile in the province's rural areas, and a more rural focus. Resource industries are key contributors to the economic health of the province, particularly in the rural parts of Nova Scotia. There is an ongoing need for the department to heighten public awareness and understanding of the economic importance of our natural resources to both the rural population and the province of Nova Scotia as a whole, and the efforts made by the department to manage our resources in a responsible and sustainable manner.

Fourth, the department is responsible for significant infrastructure, such as parks, trails, fire towers, buildings, vehicles and equipment. It is a continuing challenge to replace and maintain this essential aging infrastructure.

Finally, a process to develop a new strategy governing Nova Scotia's natural resources began in 2007-08. The strategy will include four key components: forests, minerals, parks, and biodiversity (which is the diversity among and within plant and animal species in an

ecosystem). Open and inclusive public consultations will play a critical role in making the process a success.

## 4 Department Progress and Accomplishments

The department's broad, medium-term goals, that were included in the 2008-09 Business Plan, are listed below. These are to:

- increase awareness and understanding of sound natural resources management principles and practices;
- continuously improve departmental strategies for managing natural resources and Crown land;
- improve internal departmental planning processes and management systems; and
- improve the department's work environment and the capacity of staff to deliver departmental programs and services.

The following sections report on accomplishments during 2008-09 for each priority listed under the four individual goals provided in the department's 2008-09 Business Plan.

### 4.1 Increase Awareness and Understanding of Sound Natural Resources Management Principles and Practices

#### 4.1.1 Social Marketing

The department's website is a key tool for distributing information to stakeholders, the general public and staff. During 2008-09 approximately 80% of the website was converted to the new government standard. Approximately 45% of this content was accessible to the public with another 35% converted to the new standard and ready for posting after appropriate departmental approvals are received. In addition to matching Nova Scotia Government webpage layout standards, new pages are now being designed in an attempt to anticipate or better meet public demand for information.

From a technical aspect, the new format allows better dating of the files so the public can verify their timeliness. The new menu system makes navigation easier and also knowing where you are within the website more intuitive.

The Nova Scotia Provincial Parks website was totally redesigned to be more promotional and easier to navigate. The parks event database was expanded and new photo galleries were added for many parks. More print / "lure" materials were posted for download to market the park system and attract visitors.

The department's internal Intranet site was also redesigned for easier navigation and commonly used forms were grouped in a central location. Staff were encouraged to visit new features such as staff profiles, seasonal/theme events, and new department-wide initiatives such as the Rewards & Recognition Program

The department participated in DEMO International 2008, which took place in Devon, Halifax County from September 18-20, 2008, as an exhibitor and organizer. This was the 11th edition of DEMO and the first time the event was hosted east of Quebec. DEMO is a world-class event, held every four years, that is one of North America's largest and most unique outdoor equipment shows. DEMO 2008 featured over 100 exhibitors on a three kilometre loop in the forest exhibiting forestry-related equipment.

Staff prepared display material for an exhibit with a theme of "building the future through responsible management" and developed an interpretive trail at the show. The department had an allocation of 1.5 hectares of forest that was used to demonstrate how advice and services are provided that help manage the province's natural resources, both now and in the future. A Kids in the Forest Event was organized for about 300 grade 6 school children during the show. Overall attendance at DEMO was approximately 6,100 persons with an estimated 2,500 individuals visiting the DNR exhibit area.

## 4.2 Continuously Improve Departmental Strategies for Managing Natural Resources

### 4.2.1 Natural Resources Strategy Development

On May 1, 2007, government announced that work would begin on the development of a comprehensive natural resources strategy covering forests, minerals, parks and biodiversity. This strategy is to determine the priorities and direction for government actions necessary for the management of the resources covered by the strategy and the programs, services and activities related to their management. The ultimate result will be a policy framework that supports sustainable natural resource management, the conservation of a healthy natural environment and current and new economic opportunities linked to these resources.

The natural resources strategy is being prepared using a three-phase approach, with the final strategy expected to be complete in 2010, as specified in the *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act*. In the initial phase, an independent citizen committee appointed through Voluntary Planning was to lead citizens and stakeholders in discussions to lay the foundation and define the values for a long-term strategy. Information gathered through public engagement is to be used in Phase 2 of the strategy. In this second phase an independent panel will conduct a more detailed analysis of the Voluntary Planning project committee findings. Phase 3 will be the development of the long-term strategy itself using the inputs / deliverables from Phases 1 and 2.

During 2008-09, the department provided both human resources and financial support to Voluntary Planning (VP) to assist in the Phase 1 process. VP held over 27 consultation sessions across the province between May 12, 2008 and June 17, 2008. Sessions were held in every county and half the province's municipalities. Sessions were held in French for three communities: Cheticamp, Tusket and Saulnierville. Approximately 2,000 individuals attended these sessions while over 600 more written submissions were received by VP on-line.

Following an analysis of the information gathered, a Working Paper of some initial conclusions was released in October 2008 and three public workshops were held to review the Paper. VP's final report was nearing completion by the end of March 2009. (The final report, "The Future of Nova Scotia's Natural Resources: Our Common Ground", was released on April 17, 2009. The report included five key values that Nova Scotians expect to see reflected in the new Natural Resources Strategy. These values are sustainability, diversity, collaboration, transparency, and informed decision making.)

Phase 2 is a more detailed technical/scientific analysis to be led by panels of independent expertise. The department will have minimal involvement and most of the work will be carried out and overseen by independent panels, appointed by the Minister of Natural Resources. The department will play a facilitative and coordinating role in Phase 2. In preparation for Phase 2, the process for stakeholder engagement was developed.

This process will feature a three member Steering Panel that will oversee, at a high level, the Phase 2 consultation process. Under the auspices of the Phase 2 Steering Panel, four Panels of Expertise will solicit, in an open and unbiased manner, stakeholder technical expertise from across the province in the four areas of focus. Findings and recommendations from each Panel of Expertise will feed the Steering Panel's Phase 2 report and recommendations that in turn will inform Phase 3, when

the Natural Resources Strategy will be written. Each of the four Panels of Expertise will have an appointed department liaison person to work with them. The department liaison person will serve as a research and communication link.

The process also provides an opportunity for other government departments and agencies to be involved through the formation of an interdepartmental stakeholder committee. Departments included are Environment; Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations; Tourism, Culture and Heritage; Economic and Rural Development; Aquaculture and Fisheries; and Intergovernmental Affairs. In addition to developing the process in 2008-09 in anticipation of the Phase 2 work, the department developed terms of reference for each group, including roles and responsibilities, and criteria for membership for the Steering Panel, Panels of Expertise and the department liaisons.

Once the terms of reference were in place, the department began the process to fill each of the groups. For the Steering Panel the department solicited interest from several prominent Nova Scotians to serve as Chair. In December 2008 former Chief Justice Constance Glube was appointed as Chair. During the remainder of 2008-09, the department was engaged with other prominent Nova Scotians to identify the remaining two Panel members to be appointed by the Minister. (In mid-April 2009 Mr. Joe Marshall, executive director of the Union of Nova Scotia Indians and the Mi'kmaq senior advisor for the Mi'kmaq Rights Initiative, and Mr. Allan Shaw, non-executive chairman of the Shaw Group and a director with the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Public Affairs, were appointed as the remaining two Steering Panel members.)

In January 2009, as part of the continuing preparations for Phase 2, the department placed advertisements (in both English and French) in newspapers across the province seeking applicants to serve on the panels. In addition, the department wrote to stakeholder groups and organizations asking that they submit names for consideration as members on the Panels of Expertise. The department received over 60 applications for appointment to the Panels of Expertise.

A preliminary screening of all the applications, using the criteria from the Panels of Expertise's terms of reference, was completed. The Steering Panel members will review the applicants and will make recommendations to the Minister for Panel of Expertise membership.

During 2008-09 a recruitment process was initiated and completed for department staff interested in acting as department liaisons for one of the four Panels of Expertise. Staff were invited to apply for these positions based on the criteria in the

Liaison's Terms of Reference. Following a screening process, the Deputy Minister selected the successful applicants and the four Liaisons were appointed.

Another essential component of the Natural Resources Strategy process was the communication of project information to department staff, other departments, stakeholders and the public. In the fall of 2008 the department's Deputy Minister made presentations to staff at several locations across the province. Staff were informed of the work of Voluntary Planning to date and advised on the general process that would be used for Phase 2. Following each presentation staff engaged in a discussion with the Deputy on the Strategy process.

Throughout the year department staff met on a regular basis, both formally and informally, and attended workshops, seminars and meetings with interest groups and stakeholders to update them on the progress of the Strategy and to seek their input to the development of the Phase 2 process. Staff also met, both formally and informally, with staff of other several departments, including the coordinators of the other related government strategies underway (Water, Energy, Climate Change, Coastal). Several times through the year DNR staff were apprised on the Strategy progress via emails from the Deputy Minister and from the department's Strategy Coordinator. Management staff of the department focused on the Strategy during workshops dedicated to the process and provided feedback to the Project Management Team and the department's senior management team. The value of having an internal communications team was recognized and, by year-end, a terms of reference was developed and plans were initiated to put a group in place.

In order to accommodate the number of people appointed to the panels and the amount of work involved in Phase 2, the department turned its training room into a 'strategy centre', which will provide additional work and meeting space for the duration of Phase 2.

### 4.2.2 *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act*

The *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act* (EGSPA), passed in April 2007, committed the government to achieving 21 specific environmental and economic goals.

One goal was to establish a policy of preventing net loss of wetlands by 2009. During 2008-09 the department had proposed a project to undertake obtain an accurate figure for the area and types of wetlands in the province. This work was dependent on either the department or NSE having available the financial and staff

resources to carry out the project. However sufficient resources were not able to be allocated so the wetlands inventory work was deferred.

Another goal was to develop a comprehensive water-resource management strategy by 2010. In order to develop the strategy, a scientifically-based assessment and mapping of the province's aquifers is required. During 2008-09, methodologies were developed for estimating groundwater availability and groundwater use in each primary watershed in Nova Scotia, including a pilot study with private and government partners to develop a comprehensive inventory of groundwater use the Annapolis Valley.

A relational framework was developed for managing groundwater information and existing groundwater databases were significantly enhanced. The availability of groundwater data was improved through the publication of a map of Nova Scotia's groundwater regions, and the development of an online interactive map showing available groundwater information. Various groundwater research initiatives in the province were supported, including a study on the source and transport of naturally occurring uranium in a sandstone aquifer supplying the Town of Bridgetown.

The department devoted considerable effort toward the achievement of the goal to legally protect twelve per cent of the total land mass of the Province by 2015. The department reviewed and considered offers by several land owners (J.D. Irving, Wagner Forest Products, Neenah Paper) to sell large tracts of land, portions of which would be highly suited for protection and conservation purposes. Proposals and options for acquiring some or all of the land were developed and presented to Cabinet. An offer was sent to JD Irving regarding a portion of their lands for sale.

In collaboration with NSE, the department prepared an overall plan for identifying and acquiring the land needed to achieve the 12% EGSPA goal. Working in the capacity of land agent for Nova Scotia Environment, the following lands were acquired as parcels with potential for inclusion in the 12% legally protected lands:

- Tidney Lake, Queens County - 20.25 ha
- Lake Frederick, Halifax County - 26.0 ha
- Scotland Creek, Shelburne County - 19.0 ha
- Cole Harbour, Guysborough County - 20.0 ha
- North Brookfield, Queens County - 20.8 ha
- Cape Split, Kings County - 0.57 ha

The department also worked with the Nova Scotia Nature Trust, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Eastern Habitat Joint Venture, and Ducks Unlimited to

identify lands for conservation and protection and to work in partnership with these private sector organization to acquire and protect lands. During the year the department worked to extend, renew and initiate new agreements with these organizations.

### 4.2.3 Climate Change Analysis

During 2008-09 the department, along with the Department of Energy, participated on the Conference Board of Canada's Leaders' Roundtable on Climate Change Adaptation. The Leaders' Roundtable on Climate Change Adaptation is an independent public–private research and dialogue partnership that brings together senior leaders from a broad range of sectors, including business, government and academia to share insights, suggest joint solutions and inform policy relating to climate change adaptation. Adaptation is an essential response to climate change. Our ability to identify and respond to the physical effects of climate change is dependent on our ability to share and integrate information from multiple sources and types across disciplines.

The primary goal of the Roundtable is to strengthen the capacity of member institutions to act proactively, effectively and in partnership with one another. A secondary goal is to raise broader awareness of the need for climate change adaptation policies. Finally, it is intended that the Roundtable be the definitive voice in identifying adaptation needs, monitoring actions by governments and the private sector, and reporting annually to the public on progress.

The Roundtable permits the development of a productive working environment with both the private and public sectors by fostering positive, ongoing relationships and engagement with key stakeholders. This provides a venue and a context for dialogue and networking with business and various levels of government. The result is a growing capacity to develop and implement better and more targeted policies and programs.

Members of the Leaders' Roundtable participate in facilitated workshops and networking meetings, and have ongoing access to cutting edge research and information. By holding workshops across the country, the Roundtable has been able to highlight regional programs and projects that may be of interest to other parts of Canada. For example, the Roundtable met in Halifax in March 2009 and focused on adaptation measures in place / planned in the Atlantic area.

The Atlantica BioEnergy Task Force was a group consisting of industrial, post-secondary and government agencies from the Maritime Provinces and the State of Maine. The departments of Natural Resources, Energy, and Economic and Rural Development were participants from the Nova Scotia Government. The main purpose of the Task Force was to facilitate a comprehensive multi-disciplinary study on the potential for bio-energy, bio-chemicals and other bio-products within the region. The intention of the evaluation was to identify the steps required to develop and promote new industry related products. Issues addressed included biomass availability, technology maturity, policy implications and economic impact.

Following the completion of the study, a leaders' roundtable, consisting of industry, government and sector leadership, was held to target tangible actions in order to move the study findings into meaningful outcomes. Following the leaders' roundtable, a comprehensive research and development forum was held to discuss the gaps between industry's needs and current R&D in the field of bioenergy.

The department was a full participant in the Task Force and leader's roundtable. Staff contributed to the research phase, and participated in technical workshops and the plenary session when the study findings were presented.

Subsequently, a provincial group was created that included the Nova Scotia Government, industry, Dalhousie University, the Nova Scotia Agriculture College and FP Innovations. This group was established to identify the provincial potential for bioenergy and biorefineries and investigate opportunities for projects in these areas.

At the request of the Council of the Federation, through the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers, the department contributed towards and cooperated with the federal government and other provincial governments to prepare a national report on the impact of climate change on tree species. Improvements were made in the department's forest models to allow estimates to be made of the amount of biomass carbon being created and stored in the province's forests.

A project to model potential tree species distribution for current and projected future climates for Nova Scotia was completed. The project was funded by the Natural Resources and the Department of Energy. Initial findings indicated that the future temperature conditions in the Year 2100 would be similar to those currently present in the states of Kentucky and Virginia. As a result, the distribution of tree species that favour cooler climates, such as balsam fir and black spruce, would be reduced. Meanwhile, the distribution of tree species that favour milder climates, such as red oak and black cherry, would increase. Further research work is needed to investigate

a wider range of climate change scenarios and other factors that influence tree species distribution that are potentially sensitive to climate change.

In 2008-09 the department carried out a project to map the susceptibility of the St. Margarets Bay area to hazards such as coastal erosion, submergence and flooding. Mapping of the St. Margarets Bay coastal zone was completed. Areas that are at highest risk of flooding and erosion due to major storm events and sea level rise have been identified. Potential users of the data (e.g. municipal planners, coastal researchers, Emergency Management Office officials, etc.) were contacted to increase their awareness and to facilitate the best use of the information.

### 4.2.4 Forest Industry Transition Support

On October 12, 2007 the Province announced a new program to invest in woodlot silviculture and support a number of other forest-related initiatives so the forest industry in the province can transition to a more stable position. Funding was provided for several initiatives and a Joint Government-Industry Task Force was established to investigate other possible options that could be added to the transition program. Initiatives included additional funding for silviculture programs and for the Forest Operators Assistance Program and funding for programs delivered by the Forest Safety Society.

During 2008-09, almost $4.2 million was provided for wood buyer's silviculture programs. No additional silviculture funding was to be provided in subsequent years.

The Forest Products Association of Nova Scotia (FPANS) administers the Forest Operators Assistance Program on behalf of the department. The FPANS received a $300 thousand contribution for their 2008-09 program expenses, which funds forest road construction.

The Forest Safety Society of Nova Scotia (FSSNS) is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to develop and deliver training programs for the forest industry of the province. Training is primarily focused on safety. A contribution of $70 thousand was provided to the FSSNS in 2008-09 to support the continuing delivery of safety-related training courses.

### 4.2.5 Off-highway Vehicle Program Support

The Action Plan for Off-highway Vehicles (OHV) was released in October 2005. The Action Plan included measures to improve public safety, prevent damage to the

environment, protect private property rights, and steps to be taken to provide increased enforcement with respect to OHV issues.

During 2008-09, certain responsibilities for off-highway vehicles were transferred to the Minister of Natural Resources from the Minister of Health Promotion and Protection (HPP). The transfer officially assigned responsibility for matters relating to safety equipment, clothing and training, age restrictions, closed courses and safe vehicle operation to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the department. These responsibilities were in addition to the department's existing areas of responsibility, which included OHV enforcement, guiding the development of an OHV trail network and designated trails, secretariat support to the OHV Ministerial Advisory Committee, management of the OHV Infrastructure Fund, and leadership of the OHV Action Plan.

Although no specific priority was identified in the 2008-09 Business Plan, as a result of the transfer of OHV related responsibilities from HPP, a section was added to report on OHV related accomplishments during the year.

Support was provided to the OHV Ministerial Advisory Committee in a number of areas. These areas included administering all transfers to and from the OHV Infrastructure Fund, providing guidance on the expansion of the volunteer-based NS Trail Patrol, tracking OHV related fines and warnings, and staffing a booth at the Atlantic Outdoor and RV show to educate members of the public on safe and responsible OHV use.

Discussions were facilitated with the OHV Ministerial Advisory Committee and members of the OHV Interdepartmental Committee on a number of topics including established trails, Crown land access, abandoned rail lines, community consultation, enforcement and OHV plate and permit policies. The department continued to operate the OHV Enforcement Unit throughout the province, which focused specifically on off-highway vehicle related issues.

Substantial effort was spent on the development of trails available for OHV use. The department worked closely with the Trails Subcommittee of OHV Ministerial Advisory Committee. A number of trail development and maintenance projects were approved throughout the year. These projects received $977,894 from the Infrastructure Fund and, by leveraging other funds, resulted in a total investment in excess of $4.9 million made in trail infrastructure throughout the province. Staff also worked to resolve community level issues associated with the use of motorized vehicles on trails.

### 4.3 Improve Internal Departmental Planning Processes and Management Systems

The department continued to work towards improvements in our internal planning systems and in the collection of information needed to make sound decisions for effective operations and for priority setting.

#### 4.3.1 Better Regulation Initiative

The Better Regulation Initiative is a government-wide initiative that is intended to make Nova Scotia a more business-friendly location through the reduction and avoidance of red tape. Regulations are often needed to protect society, but they must be done in a way that allows businesses to operate effectively. The quality of regulation is increasingly viewed as a key factor that contributes to business success.

Government has committed to a reduction in the paperwork burden for businesses, associated with meeting regulatory requirements, by 20 per cent by the year 2010, while at the same time ensuring that regulations continue to protect the public, the environment and our communities. Government has also committed to a 10-day service standard by 2010, unless an alternative service standard has been approved where there are legitimate reasons why more than a 10 day service standard is required.

A substantial proportion of the department's administrative requirements (on the basis of the number of transactions and total time to complete the administrative requirements) is accounted for in order to meet the requirements of the *Mineral Resources Act*. This Act accounts for just under 60% of transactions and slightly over 75% of the time required for all the department's administrative requirements.

A significant modernization project began in 2006-07 with the development and issuing of a Request for Proposals for the design, development, testing, and implementation of an Automated Integrated Mineral and Petroleum Rights Registry. This project was included as a separate priority in the 2008-09 Business Plan. Reporting is provided later in the document in Section 4.3.3.

Another project to improve service delivery that was started in 2008-09 was the Land Services Renewal Project. The decision to initiate a renewal project was due to a recognized need to modernize the technology used to support business processes, reduce backlogs and allow staff to work more effectively. The department is responsible for Crown Land records research and management, migration of Crown lands into the land registration system; Crown land acquisitions, disposals, leases and claims; GIS and cartography; and coordination of Crown land surveys.

In the initial stage of the project, current business processes were reviewed with a view to improving the delivery of services to stakeholders and clients. Opportunities for short-term tactical improvements were identified. This information was used to develop a future vision for the delivery of land related services that uses technology to enable and streamline business processes, and described the steps and effort to move from the current situation to the future vision.

Current business processes were documented to identify the steps needed to complete each land related activity. Project meetings and workshops were held where participants were asked to identify items they believed did not work efficiently, activities that did not add value and opportunities for improvement. Over 40 tactical recommendations to improve current operations were made through these discussions. For each business process the work effort, wait areas and times, and backlog size and effort to resolve were documented.

Phase Two of the Land Services Renewal Project was also completed in 2008-09. In this phase, key business processes were redesigned to eliminate unnecessary steps and streamline the processes. Implementation of the recommendations coming out of this review will take place in 2009-10. In the next phase, systems requirements will be documented to start the process of developing a technology solution to address the data collection and distribution issues faced in the delivery of land-related services.

### 4.3.2 French-language Services

The *French-language Services Act*, was proclaimed in early December 2004. Regulations were developed which came into effect on December 31, 2006. The objective of the regulations is "to ensure that there are substantive and measurable improvements to the French-language services offered by the Government of Nova Scotia" and, by extension, by the department.

The department's focus during the year was in three main areas: translation of documents to French, consultations, and training. Three parks related documents were translated for use in the 2008 camping park season. A French version of the reservation postcard, descriptions of the camping parks in the brochure listing all provincial camping parks, and the park rules and regulations section of the park registration booklet were all available throughout the 2008 camping park season.

A key priority of the department, described in Section 4.2.1, was the development of a Natural Resources Strategy. The first phase of the process was the citizen engagement phase, which was carried out by Voluntary Planning on behalf of the

department. During this phase consultation sessions were held in French for three communities: Cheticamp, Tusket and Saulnierville. A French version of the final report, "The Future of Nova Scotia's Natural Resources: Our Common Ground", was released on April 17, 2009, coinciding with the release of the English version. As part of the continuing preparations for Phase 2, the department placed advertisements (in both English and French) in newspapers across the province seeking applicants to serve on the panels.

Finally, a number of staff attended training courses throughout the year to raise their level of fluency in French in order to be better able to communicate with French speaking department clients.

### 4.3.3 Mineral and Petroleum Titles Registry Modernization

The Mineral and Petroleum Titles Registry manages the province's mineral tenure management systems. Functions of the Registry include granting licences and leases to mineral rights applicants, keeping records of mineral rights disposition in the province, issuing licences, leases, notifications, releases and other documents related to the province's mineral tenure system and tracking expenditures reported by mineral rights holders. A significant modernization project began in 2006-07 with the development and issuing of a Request for Proposals for the design, development, testing, and implementation of an Automated Integrated Mineral and Petroleum Rights Registry.

Phase I of the project was to provide electronic access to the Registry from the department's head office location. During this phase, users would have access to maps and records that were previously available only on paper. Phase II of the project would have provided Registry users with the ability to make Internet-based submissions (with around the clock availability of the system). This would have eliminated the need for Registry users to travel to, and make submissions at, the department's head office location.

The contractor that was engaged for the project continued to build the software for this system through 2008-09. Although there was work that remained incomplete when the contractor's contract expired March 31, 2009, contingency plans were developed and resources identified to finish the first phase of the project in-house during 2009-10, building on the development completed by the contractor.

Because of the non-completion of Phase I, little work was accomplished on Phase II. However contingency plans were developed and resources identified to finish this phase of the project in-house during 2009-10.

### 4.3.4 Business Continuity Management

Business continuity planning is a pro-active planning process used to ensure the continued availability of essential programs and services in the event of a disruption caused by either humans or nature, and to allow a return to normal operations. A business continuity plan includes: plans, measures and arrangements to ensure the continuous delivery of critical services and products. This plan enables the organization to recover its facilities, data and assets, and to identify the necessary resources to support business continuity, including personnel, information, equipment, financial allocations, legal counsel, infrastructure protection and accommodations.

During 2008-09, a business continuity plan for the department was completed that covered the department's high priority programs (or specific activities within the programs). These were the programs or activities where it was necessary to continue to provide services within a time period ranging from within less than 24 hours up to one week after any incident occurred. Any incident resulting in a loss of access to a department facility or a loss to electronic records or computer / information systems for up to seven days, any incident resulting in the death or serious injury of a co-worker, an incident where fleet or staff were provided to respond to an Emergency Management Office declared emergency or some combination of these incidents would trigger the departmental business continuity plan.

## 4.4 Improve the Department's Work Environment and the Capacity of Staff to Deliver Programs and Services

### 4.4.1 Human Resources Strategy

Government's Corporate Human Resources Plan was released in 2005 and covers the period from 2005 to 2010. In support of the corporate plan, the department began five significant human resources related initiatives: wellness, diversity, rewards and recognition, career and succession management, and recruitment and hiring.

Work teams were created in the department to develop and help implement various human resources related initiatives in the areas of recruitment and hiring, rewards and recognition, and career and succession management. Senior management representatives were appointed as champions to lead each work team.

During 2008-09, most work was carried out in the area of rewards and recognition. The intensive forest fire season of the spring and early summer of 2008 provided an opportunity to practice developing a 'culture of recognition' within the department.

Over 375 of the department's firefighters and support staff were honoured for their work at events held in Cole Harbour, McGowan Lake and Antigonish. Another initiative was the development of thank you cards featuring natural resource related photographs that managers have been encouraged to give to employees exhibiting exceptional performance. Staff within the department who reached their 5th, 10th, 15th or 20th year of service with the Province of Nova Scotia received Service Milestone Certificates. Staff who reached their 25th, 30th or 35th year of service were honoured as part of a government-wide recognition ceremony.

The Public Service Commission undertook an employee survey late in 2008-09. Results of the survey are used to identify areas for improvement. In order to remind staff of the survey and the importance of responding, the Deputy Minister's Office sent an e-mail to all staff encouraging them to take the time to fill out the survey and submit it. This survey provides the data for several of the department's performance measures and the response rate must be at a certain level in order to be able to obtain department specific information. The response rate for the March 2009 survey was 46% of staff, up significantly from the 25% of staff that responded to the March 2007 survey.

Another change which had a significant impact on the department were amendments made to the *Civil Service Collective Bargaining Act* in December 2007. The amendments directly affected many of the department's casual and seasonal employees by changing the length of time these workers were required to work before they could be appointed to civil service bargaining unit positions. Effective February 1, 2008, casual or seasonal employees who had been working continuously for more than 10 weeks, or who had worked in the same department for more than a total of 10 weeks in a 52-week period, were eligible to become members of the Nova Scotia Government Employees Union (NSGEU), to receive the bargaining unit rate of pay for the jobs they were in, and to apply for civil service bargaining unit positions as internal candidates.

This was a significant change in the way that the department operated since casual and seasonal staff are essential in how the department delivers several programs and services, such as the operation of the provincial parks system and the delivery of forest fire fighting services. This was also an opportunity to improve the working conditions of these employees.

During 2008-09 all park, forest protection (fire crews) and seasonal conservation officer positions were designated as bargaining unit positions with approved position descriptions and with job classifications approved and rated by the Public Service Commission. Employees hired in these positions qualified for benefits (pension,

medical/dental, sick leave, vacation, etc.) in accordance with the duration of their employment.

A thorough review of the operational requirements for all parks, forest protection (fire crew) and seasonal conservation officer related programs was conducted. Needs were documented in a training plan that rationalized the human resources requirements, guided all hiring for these programs and allowed for forecasting the budgetary costs associated with their delivery.

## 5 Financial Results

Financial information is provided below based on the department's organizational structure.

| Department of Natural Resources Budget Context | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2008-09 | | | |
| | Estimate | Actual | Variance | |
| **Program and Service Area** | **$'000** | **$'000** | **$'000** | |
| Senior Management | 479 | 504 | 25 | 1 |
| Corporate Services Unit | 7,050 | 6,887 | (163) | 2 |
| Renewable Resources | 12,771 | 16,332 | 3,561 | 3 |
| Mineral Resources | 3,691 | 4,041 | 350 | 4 |
| Regional Services | 57,421 | 58,955 | 1,534 | 5 |
| Planning Secretariat | 4,552 | 4,889 | 337 | 6 |
| Land Services | 3,162 | 3,246 | 84 | 7 |
| **Total - Gross Expenses** | 89,126 | 94,854 | 5,728 | |
| **Less: Chargeable to other Depts** | (4,488) | (8,025) | (3,537) | 8 |
| **Total - Program Expenses** | 84,638 | 86,829 | 2,191 | |
| TCA Purchase Requirements | 3,500 | 3,377 | (123) | |
| Provincially Funded Staff (FTEs) | 864 | 828 | (36) | |

Explanation of Variances:

1. Over expenditure was due to senior officials salary increases.

2. Under expenditure was due to vacant funded positions.

3. Over expenditure was due to:
   - The Lake Echo - Porters Lake and Tantallon fires as well as smaller fires in the Shelburne County area of the province.
   - Grants issued as part of the Joint Forestry Task Force with the Nova Scotia forest industry not included in the Estimate.
   - Grants issued to the Cape Chignecto Provincial Park, the Shubenacadie Canal Commission and the Two Rivers Wildlife Park.
   - Increased seasonal operating expenditures at the Strathlorne Forest Nursery.
   - Expenditures required after Tropical Storm Noel not included in the Estimate.
   - Increased operating costs at the Shubenacadie Wildlife Park.

4. Over expenditure was due to a grant to the Mining Association of Nova Scotia and profession services costs associated with the Mineral and Petroleum Registry project.

5. Over expenditure was due to increases in casual salaries, WCB payments and overtime, increases in Crown land silviculture payments, and increases in equipment repairs and maintenance costs.

6. Over expenditure was due to expenditures required for the Natural Resources Strategy and for expenditures under the off-highway vehicle program that was transferred to Natural Resources from Health Promotion and Protection that were not included in the Estimate.

7. Over expenditure due to external consulting costs as a result of the branch's redesigned business processes project.

8. Increased chargeables due to:
   - increases for MCP, NSGEU and AS retroactive pay and MCP pay for performance.
   - incremental costs to the department as a result of the seasonal staff conversion requirement.
   - expenditures under the Community Development Trust.
   - expenditures related to Tropical Storm Noel recovered from EMO.
   - payments under an Inland Fisheries Agreement with the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

- funding for the off-highway vehicle program transferred from Health Promotion and Protection to Natural Resources.

## 6 Performance Measures

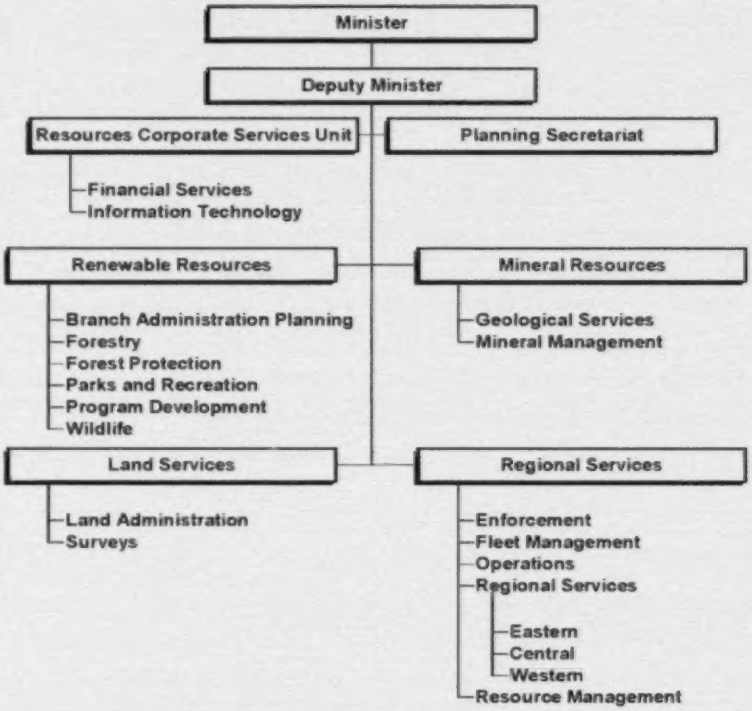
The department has identified a number of performance measures that help track success in meeting our goals. Information on each measure is provided in an appendix to this document. A brief write-up is provided that indicates what each measure tells us, where we are now (2008-09 results), and where we want to be (future target values and target years). The data for each measure is generated within the department.

The department revised its current set of performance measures beginning with the measures that were reported in the 2007-08 Business Plan. There are significantly fewer measures and they are directly aligned with the department's goals, as opposed to the previous set of measures, which were grouped by core business areas.

## 7 Supplemental Information

The department has broad responsibilities for the management of forest, mineral, parks and wildlife resources and the management of Crown lands. Nova Scotia's natural resources provide significant economic, social, heritage, cultural and environmental benefits for all Nova Scotians and are one of the province's features that make it an attractive place to live, do business in, and to visit.

The department's organization chart is



shown to the right. The department consists of five branches, as well as the Resources Corporate Services Unit (RCSU), which provides financial and information technology services to the Department of Natural Resources, several other provincial government departments, and a number of agencies, boards and commissions.

There was one change in the department's organization structure in 2008-09. The Human Resources Division, that had been part of the Resources Corporate Services Unit, was transferred to the Public Service Commission as of April 1, 2008. Although this is a change in the reporting structure, the Human Resources Division continues to provide HR services to the department.

One other significant change that occurred in 2008-09, which was mentioned earlier in the report, was the transfer of certain responsibilities for off-highway vehicles to the Minister of Natural Resources from the Minister of Health Promotion and Protection. The transfer officially assigned responsibility for matters relating to safety equipment, clothing and training, age restrictions, closed courses and safe vehicle operation to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the department. These areas were added to the department's existing OHV-related responsibilities.

**Appendix - 2008-09 Performance Measures**

The following pages provide brief explanations of the department's performance measures that were included in the 2008-09 Business Plan. Graphs are also provided for those measures where a graphical presentation of the data is appropriate.

**Strategic Goal - Increase Awareness and Understanding of Sound Natural Resources Management Principles and Practices**

**Outcome - Effective and Efficient Service to the Public**

**Measure 1 - Level of Public Satisfaction with Overall Performance of the Department**
The department periodically includes questions in random public opinion polls to measure Nova Scotians' views on different natural resources related topics. One of these questions asks the public their opinion on the department's overall performance.

**What does the measure tell us?**
This measure tells us the level of the public's satisfaction with the overall performance of the department. This would cover how well the department is providing the full range of its programs and services.

**Where are we now?**
The last time the survey was carried out was in 2005-06. At that time, 63% of respondents rated the department's performance as either good or excellent.

**Where do we want to be?**
We expect that a question will be included to collect the information needed for this measure in a public opinion survey in 2009-10. The target we are hoping to achieve is for 65% or greater of respondents to the survey to rate the department's overall performance as either very good or excellent.

**Outcome - Public Awareness of Crown Land Management**

**Measure 2 - Level of Public Awareness of Process in Place to Manage Crown Land**
The department periodically includes questions in random public opinion polls to measure Nova Scotians' awareness and understanding of different natural resources related topics. One of these questions asks the public whether they are aware of the department's process that is used to manage Crown land (the Integrated Resource Management, or IRM, planning process).

**What does the measure tell us?**
This measure tells us the level of the public's awareness of the process that is in use for the management of Crown lands in the province.

**Where are we now?**
The last survey was carried out in 2005-06. At that time, 61% of respondents knew that there was a process that was being used to manage Crown lands.

**Where do we want to be?**
We expect that a question will be included to collect the information needed for this measure in a public opinion survey in 2009-10. The target we are hoping to achieve is for 65% or more of survey respondents to be aware that there is a planning process in use to manage our Crown lands.

**Outcome - Knowledgeable Teachers and Youth**

**Measure 3 - Natural Resources Stewardship Training**

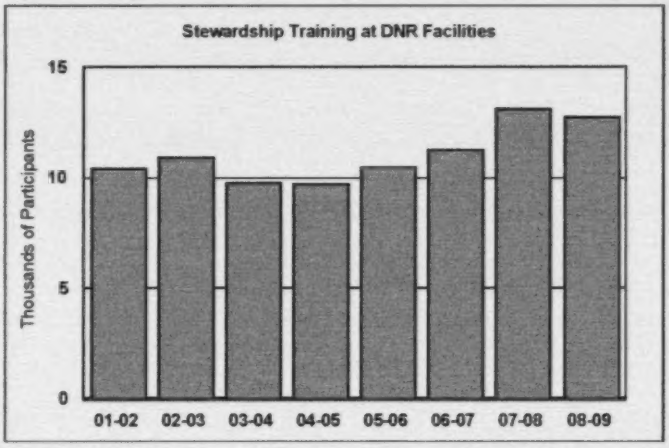
Providing natural resources stewardship training to the public, educators and youth and helping them to understand relevant issues promotes sound natural resources stewardship. It is also important to expose these groups to important stewardship concepts that they may use and pass along to others.

**What does the measure tell us?**

The measure reflects the number of teachers, adult leaders, students and youth who have participated in one of the natural resources programs at either the Shubenacadie Wildlife Park or the Natural Resources Education Centre (NREC) annually. At the Wildlife Park training is delivered on-site in two classrooms in combination with the captive indigenous wildlife at the Park and is an integral part of the provincial science curriculum. Webfoot (wetlands) education programs through Ducks Unlimited Canada have been added to the complement of nature based education programs offered at the Wildlife Park. The NREC programs involve pre- and post-visit activities as well as interactive activities as part of the visit to the Centre. As a result of the visits and participation in the programs, attendees should gain a heightened understanding of natural resource issues which will contribute to the development of a stewardship ethic.

**Where are we now?**

During 2008-09, there were 12,794 individuals who participated in training through either the Wildlife Park or the NREC, down 2.5% from the previous year (2007-08 figures were revised upward to 13,116).




**Where do we want to be?**

The department's target for this measure is 18,000 individuals annually by 2009-10. While a sustained increase in the number of participants is desirable in future years, an increased effort is being placed on reaching teachers, students, youth and youth educators who reside outside of the core service area (which is within a one hour drive of the NREC) through the provision of distance-learning support, in-service training, and outreach activities. There are concerns that increased transportation costs are having a negative impact on the number of visitors to these two facilities and this will make it difficult to achieve the 2009-10 target, which was set in the department's 2005-06 business plan.

**Strategic Goal - Improve Department Strategies for Managing Natural Resources and Crown Land**

**Outcome - Effective Management of Resource Supply**

**Measure 4 - Required Value of Silviculture on Private and Industrial Lands Completed**

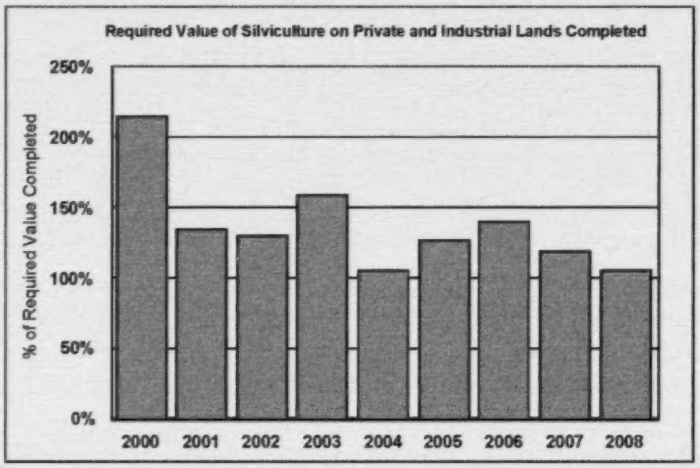
Wood supply sustainability can be managed effectively through an aggressive silviculture program. The department monitors wood harvesting and forecasts long-term wood supply by incorporating both harvesting and silviculture data into the forecast. During the last decade there has been much pressure placed on private woodlots to support the provincial demand for wood. Maintaining an adequate level of silviculture will help to provide for a future supply of wood on private woodlots.

**What does this measure tell us?**

The measure helps to explain whether the level of silviculture activity being reported by wood buyers exceeds the required amount (as per the requirements of the *Forest Sustainability Regulations*). A ratio of 100% means that the level of silviculture reported equals the amount of silviculture activity required under the *Forest Sustainability Regulations*.

**Where are we now?**

During the calendar year 2008, approximately 10.7 million silviculture credits were required and about 11.3 million credits were claimed (including administrative credits). As a result, completed silviculture was 105% of the amount required under the *Forest Sustainability Regulations*.




**Where do we want to be?**

The department's target for this measure for 2008 was 100% or greater (this measure is calculated on a calendar year basis). As long as this measure exceeds 100%, the amount of actual silviculture work being claimed is greater than the amount which is required (under the *Forest Sustainability Regulations*). Each year the target for this measure will remain at 100% or greater.

**Outcome - Species Diversity**

**Measure 5 - Endangered and Threatened Species with Recovery Plans in Place**

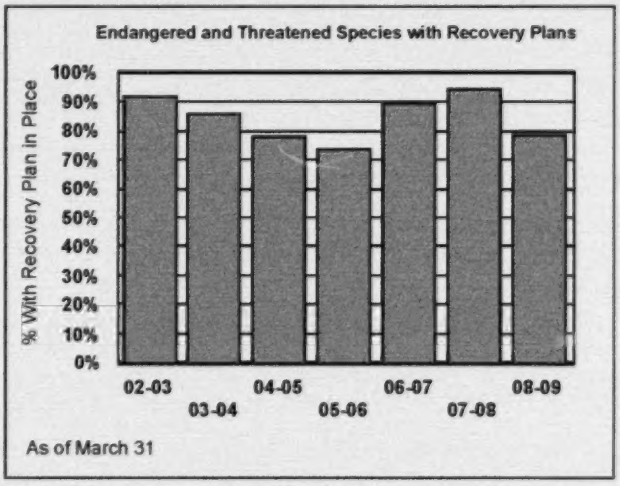
The department is committed to the conservation and protection of species at risk, provincially and nationally, through the *Nova Scotia Endangered Species Act* and the *Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk*.

**What does the measure tell us?**

The measure is an indicator of how much work is being done to restore the health of endangered and threatened species. Recovery plans are the focal instrument for addressing the recovery needs for species at risk and guide governments, recovery teams and others, in their conservation efforts, and are now being prepared as required by the *Endangered Species Act*. Recovery plans establish, for each endangered and threatened species, what needs to be done, how much it will cost, when it will be done and who will do the work. The plans also set goals for what is required to down-list a species at risk and establish a strategy for attaining these goals. To down-list a species means to move it to a lower risk category. New species are listed periodically under the *Endangered Species Act*. Recovery plans are required to be in place for each endangered species within one year after the species was listed, and within two years for those species listed as being threatened.

**Where are we now?**

As of March 31, 2009, 24 species were listed as either endangered or threatened. Of these 24 species, 23 of them were required to have a recovery plan in place by March 31, 2009 and 18 of them, or 78%, did have a recovery plan in place as of that date. Information on the province's species at risk can be found on the department's website. Plans are underway for four recently listed species.




**Where do we want to be?**

Our annual target is to have required recovery plans in place for all (100%) species listed under the Act. The listing of five species as Endangered in late 2007 resulted in a decline in our performance in completing recovery plans. On three bird species we have begun recovery planning with Environment Canada but completion will be in part dependent on their resources and timeliness. A plan for Ram's-head Ladies Slipper has been drafted and is in review. Extra effort is also spent making occasional revisions to completed recovery plans to incorporate new information that becomes available.

**Outcome - Conservation of Ecosystem Function**

**Measure 6 - Compliance with the *Wildlife Habitat and Watercourses Protection Regulations***

The *Wildlife Habitat and Watercourses Protection Regulations* (under the *Forests Act*) were developed to maintain fish and wildlife habitats and water quality in and near forest harvesting operations on all lands. There are three requirements in the Regulations: reduced harvesting along watercourses in Special Management Zones, clumps of living trees left standing in the harvest site and large pieces of woody debris left evenly scattered over the site.

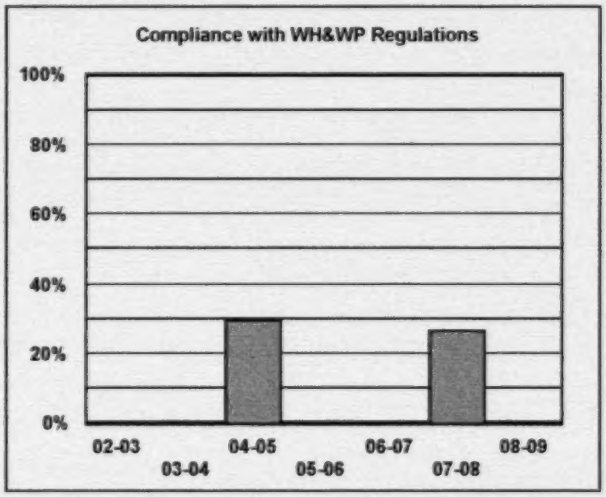
**What does the measure tell us?**

The percentage of harvesting operations that meet the legal standards is a measure of how well natural environments are being protected and also a measure of the forest operators' knowledge of the Regulations and their commitment to environmental stewardship. A sample of harvest sites is visited periodically to measure compliance with the Regulations.

**Where are we now?**

The Regulations became effective on January 14, 2002. Visits to a random sample of sites in 2004-05 (sites harvested shortly after implementation of the regulations) showed 29% in full compliance.

The last random monitoring of harvest sites was carried out in 2007-08, with 141 sites done. Results showed that approximately 26% of these sites were in full compliance, which was not significantly different statistically from the 2004-05 results achieved (given the margins of error in the results from each survey).




Harvest sites not in full compliance were often in partial compliance with parts of the Regulations, such the inclusion of legacy clumps or providing special management zones (if required). However full compliance was not achieved for reasons such as the legacy clumps that were left not being large enough or that they included the wrong species of trees, while the special management zones may not have been wide enough.

**Where do we want to be?**

The target for this measure was 90% compliance by 2010-11. The department will continue its attempts to raise the level of compliance by a combination of educational and enforcement activities.

**Strategic Goal - Improve the Department's Work Environment and the Capacity of Staff to Deliver Programs and Services**

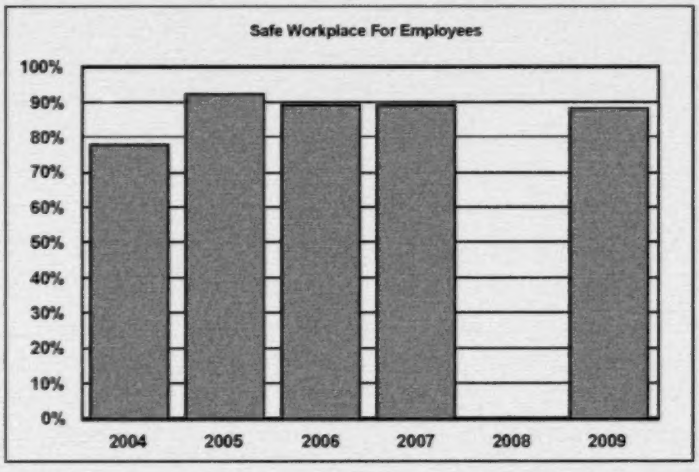
**Outcome - Safe Staff and Workplaces**

**Measure 7 - Percent of Employees That Somewhat Agree or Strongly Agree That The Department Creates a Safe Work Environment**

The Public Service Commission surveys employees of the Nova Scotia Government on a regular basis. One of the questions in the How's Work Going survey asks whether the department creates a safe work environment for its employees.

**What does the measure tell us?**
This measure reports the estimated percentage of the department's employees (based on the survey results) that gave a favourable response to the question (either they somewhat agreed or they strongly agreed that the department provides a safe work environment for its employees.

**Where are we now?**
The latest survey was administered in March 2009 (no survey was done in 2008). The department's result for this question, from the 2009 survey, was 88%, down one percentage point from the 89% achieved in the March 2007 survey. The 88% result was six percentage points higher than the 82% achieved corporately by respondents from all departments and agencies.




**Where do we want to be?**
The department has set a target of 80% for the results of the 2011 survey (to be reported in the fiscal year the results first become available). The target was originally set in the 2007-08 business plan based on the 2004 survey results and may be considered a minimum level that the department would like to achieve in the 2011 survey.

**Outcome - Knowledgeable Staff**

**Measure 8 - Percent of Employees That Somewhat Agree or Strongly Agree That They Have Access to Training Opportunities**

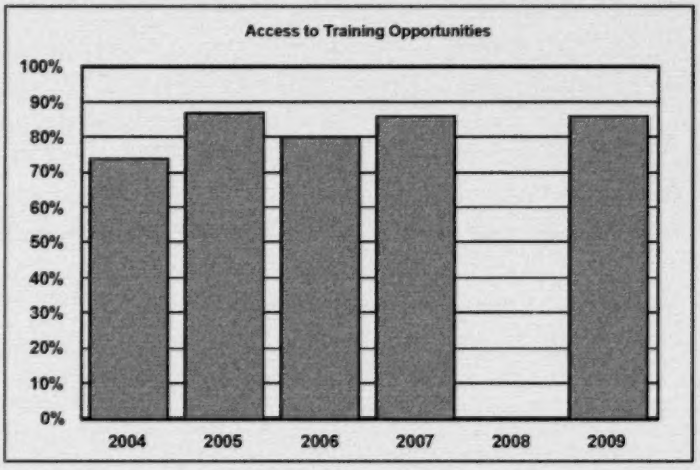
The Public Service Commission surveys employees of the Nova Scotia Government on a regular basis. One of the questions in the How's Work Going survey asks whether the employee has access to training opportunities.

**What does the measure tell us?**

This measure reports the estimated percentage of the department's employees (based on the survey results) that gave a favourable response to the question (either they somewhat agreed or they strongly agreed that they have access to training opportunities).

**Where are we now?**

The latest survey was administered in March 2009 (no survey was done in 2008). The department's result for this question, from the 2009 survey, was 83%, down three percentage points from the 86% achieved in the March 2007 survey. The 83% result was six percentage points higher than the 77% achieved corporately by respondents from all departments and agencies.




**Where do we want to be?**

The department has set a target of 77% for the results of the 2011 survey (to be reported in the fiscal year the results first become available). The target was originally set in the 2007-08 business plan based on the 2004 survey results and may be considered a minimum level that the department would like to achieve in the 2011 survey.